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Sustainable Coastal Tourism: A Community Perspective

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Abstract

The fundamental principle of sustainable coastal tourism lays on the crystal clear water, healthy eco-system and well maintained coastal environment. Coastal tourism has drawn international attention and become highly competitive as everyone tries to increase their market share in terms of beach visitors, both domestic and international. The result of the studies in U.S proved that beaches are leading tourist destination followed by national parks and historic sites (Houston& James R, 1996).

Normally, any development plan at coastal area is always looked from a commercial perspective, whereas environmental aspect is concerned, it is being described as “trying to minimize environmental effects”. This attitude leads to unsustainable coastal tourism development which has a multiple negative implications not only on the environment and society but also it leads to economic leakage as it destroys the physical structures such as landscape, the bio-diversity and the eco-system-in the sea and on the land which makes the foundation for tourism activities at coastal area.

India too has a coastline of 7525 Kms. Spread across nine states, in which Karnataka also has a part. Coastal

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Karnataka consists of three districts - Uttara Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. It has a coastal area of 300 Kms that comprises a handful of potential virgin beaches. With a systematic and careful development approach towards these potential beaches, the State's beach area can be turned into attractive destinations that can vie with the best that her two nearest coastal neighbours (Kerala and Goa) have to offer.

This study is confined to five beaches of Dakshina Kannada (Ullal, Someshwar, Thannir Bhavi, Panambur and Surathkal) with a view to evaluate certain sustainable practices (community participation and benefits, environment protection, socio-cultural preservation and enrichment etc.) expected to be there on the study area. The researchers have used questionnaire method in order to collect the responses from the tourism related firms and local community.

Keywords: Community, Involvement, Beaches, Sustainable, Protection

Introduction:

Tourism being a rapidly growing service industry with multiple growth potential has become crucial sector in building the nations in general and development of international community in particular. In fact, tourism has a major role in accelerating the socio-economic development all over the world. Therefore, it is being weighed equally with the other sectors of the developed countries as well as of the developing economies. Tourism is considered and accepted by all as an engine of economic growth. Most of the countries realized the vast potential of tourism industry by exploring their historic-societal and cultural and environmental resources.

Tourism is always been assessed and questioned for its abandoned potential in bringing changes to a country's economic, ecological, societal and cultural set up. However, its capability to generate employment and its capacity to earn foreign exchange has made this industry highly acceptable for everyone such as government, planners, entrepreneurs and the host community.

Tourism industry in India is on a great boom at the moment. India has tremendous potential to become a major global tourist destination and Indian tourism industry is exploiting this potential to the hilt. Travel and tourism industry is the second highest foreign exchange earner for India. Tourism industry also provides employment to millions of people in India both directly and indirectly through its linkage with other sectors of the economy. According to an estimate, total direct employment in the tourism sector is around 20 million.

As per the latest statistics revealed by the Department of Tourism, Karnataka ranks fourth nationally with 27 million domestic arrivals and 0.62 million international arrivals making it the seventh most-visited state in India.

Dakshina Kannada which is popularly known as “Cultural Capital of Karnataka state, is contributing and yet to contribute significantly to the tourism prosperity of this state. It is a district in the state where one can find a wide variety of natural and cultural attractions. In spite of all these tourism treasures the district has, a sheer lack of channelizing towards utility maximization of tourism potentials is seen throughout the district.

Sustainable Coastal Tourism

Two third of the earth surface is covered with water benefitting billions of people spread across all the continents of the globe. Coastal margins equate to only 8% of the world’s surface area but provide 25% of global productivity. Stress on this environment comes with approximately 70% of the world’s population being within a day’s walk from the coast. Two-thirds of the world’s cities occur on the coast (BROWN, K., TOMPKINS, E. L. & ADGER, N. 2002).

According to the report and recommendations of the study on “India: Sustainable Coastal Protection and Management Investment Program” by the President to the Board of Directors of Proposed Multi-tranche Financing Facility, “India has a coastline of 7,525 kilometres along the nine national coastal states of the mainland and 2,100 km in the union territories. About 20%-25% of its population lives within 50 km of the coast, with 70% of them

residing in rural areas. All the coastal states and territories are affected by coastal erosion. Coastline erosion over the years has intensified in the west coast—in the states of Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.(UN 1998)

Coastal Karnataka consists of three districts - Uttara Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. These "three jewels" having 18,732 sq km of area are bordered by the Arabian Sea on one side and the Western Ghats on the other. It has a coastal area of 300 Kms comprised of handful of potential virgin beaches. With a systematic and careful development approach towards these potential beaches, the State's beach area can be turned into attractive destinations that can view with the best that her two nearest coastal neighbours (Kerala and Goa) have to offer.

To make tourism sustainable living condition of local community should be improved, their environment should be properly maintained without destruction and, thus, a prosperous future could be extended. Very often, tourism is promoted as a vehicle of social empowerment through employment generation, up gradation of local economies, preservation of traditional knowledge and extending awareness and education to local communities. The road map towards sustainable tourism for the entire nation, states, regions, and individuals is to cope up with the modern technology, integrated natural resource management and marketing concepts. Any tourism model should be collaborated and executed using participatory model involving local communities.

According to data retrieved from UNWTO website (<http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>) on 04-06-2014, Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
4. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

Sun, Sand and Sea are the three 'Mantras' which make a destination explored, from unexplored, and popular, from unpopular. Major part of the holidays around the world is connected to these three 'Mantras'. Mediterranean and Caribbean coastal area has already been identified, recognized and explored by the vacationers. India too has a coastline of 7525 Kms. Spread across nine states, in which Karnataka also has a part.

The fundamental principle of sustainable coastal tourism lays on the crystal clear water, healthy eco-system and well maintained coastal environment. Coastal tourism has drawn international attention and become highly competitive as everyone tries to increase their market share in terms of beach visitors, both domestic and international. The result of the studies in U.S proved that beaches are the leading tourist destination followed by national parks and historic sites (Houston& James R, 1996).

Nations having long and unique coastline are privileged as it provides them with a valuable space for tourism development which ultimately leads to social and economic development at the local and national level. Today's tourists are in search of extra ordinary experiences of cultural and natural attractions, gastronomy, sports etc. in a well preserved and distinctive natural environment. At the same time, people living in traditional tourist destinations are increasingly aware of and concerned about their

natural, historic and cultural heritage (UNEP 2009). A study by Wilson and Wheeler (1997) shows that predominantly coastal tourism in California is, with US\$9.9 billion, the largest contributor to the state's economy followed by ports (US\$6.0 billion) and offshore oil (US\$860 million).

EEA –European Environmental Agency (2006) data for France, for instance, shows that tourism provides 43% of jobs in French coastal regions, generating more revenue than fishing or shipping. At the same time coastal tourism in other parts of the world is also at a greater phase of growth in terms of quantity, intensity, contribution to GDP and the wellbeing of local communities. According to EC-European Commission (2003) data, 63% of European holiday makers prefer the coast as compared to 25% favouring mountains, 25% preferring cities and 23% the country side. Here again, UNWTO statistics show that 12 of the 15 world's top destination countries in 2000 were countries with coastlines.

The most destructive elements of coastal resort tourism development is land clearance and habitat degradation, while the daily operations of resort facilities consume natural resources and pollute waterways. As tourists flock to coastal areas for their holidays, they tend to demand that local sea food be present on the menu, and this is leading to over fishing of already-strained fisheries (Honey, Ph.D. and David Krantz, M.A., 2007).

Normally, any development plan at coastal area is overlooked from a commercial perspective, whereas environmental aspect is concerned, it is being described as "trying to minimize environmental effects". This attitude leads to unsustainable coastal tourism development which has a multiple negative implications. Such an attitude causes a drastic impact not only on the environment and society but also leads to economic leakage, as it destroys the physical structures such as landscape, the bio-diversity and the eco-system- in the sea and on the land which makes the foundation for tourism activities at coastal area. More attention must be paid to the integration of coastal tourism through strategic development planning which will reduce problems induced by tourism and recur both the sustainability of the tourism industry as well as coastal resources used by other sectors.

Given the scale of tourism in world's coastal zones, one of the greatest challenges faced by coastal managers is giving tourism development a proper place within integrated coastal management in order to increase its long-term sustainability (UNEP 2009). Coastal tourism being the fastest growing modern tourism puts immense pressure on the coast where nations highly depend on agriculture, human settlements, fishing, industries etc.

Referring to the above facts, coastal zone management is critical issue for most of the countries where the management of coastal resources and its usage costs lot to the nations. All three dimensions of coastal sustainability (Environmental, social and economic) have to be properly co-ordinated and integrated to implement a comprehensive approach. The core of coastal sustainability is harnessing coastal resources for optimum economic and social benefits for both present and future generations without destroying the resource base and while maintaining ecological balance.

Currently, coastal tourism seems to be the fastest growing form of tourism with the vibrancy of sun, sand and sea. It is very much mandatory to develop a well-planned and managed coastal environment with clean waters and sound coastal habitats.

Objectives and Methodology

Community participation and their socio-economic and environmental empowerment and enrichment are the core elements of the sustainable practices for any sort of tourism projects, particularly for beach tourism developments. It is on this background the researchers have decided to examine the indicators of coastal sustainability from the point of local community perspective along selected beaches of Dakshina Kannada. Sustainable tourism is impossible while keeping away the local community. They should be involved in different levels of development (Plan formulation, Implementation, Fund allocation and its usage, Monitoring etc.) as a part and parcel of the tourism development activities. There are clear guidelines prescribed by UN WTO (2004), through "Indicators of Sustainable Development of Tourism Destinations" where community participation and their

benefits have been given paramount importance. This study is being carried out based on these guidelines given by UN WTO aiming at finding out the gap between expectations and performance at these selected beaches.

The researchers in this study have used non-probability method of sampling method though samples have been collected from different strata (5 Different beaches). A convenient sampling method has been used as the researchers have distributed questionnaires as per the availability of the respondents. Forty questionnaires were administered to 40 different households to know their response related to their participation, socio-economic benefits, their expectation about the developmental model etc. Questionnaires were administered in two languages (English & Kannada) to make the questions more intelligible to the respondents. The collected data has been analysed and interpreted using simple percentage method.

For theoretical framework and literature reviews, the researchers have depended on books, articles, websites and reports. The existing literature only led to find the gap and proceed towards this particular aspect of study.

Analysis and Findings

1. Maximum number of respondents was between 20-40 age group with 40% having primary as their education level. Maximum people are either privately employed or running their own business and 79% of the people are doing a job not related to tourism sector. 67% of the coastal residents are living there for more than 15 years and 52% of them prefer the place since they were born there.
2. With respect to the preference given to various aspects such as waste reduction, noise control, water quality, air quality, preserving culture, tradition etc. in terms of their importance, more than 60% have given highest priority to these requirements.
3. In terms of the benefits (social, economic, environmental and cultural) extended to the coastal community, only 40-

50% of them agreed with the fact that they have benefitted from the tourism development in the beach area. This clearly exposes the fact that the all-round benefit to the local community is meagre, a fact found contrary to the sustainable coastal tourism model.

4. In the case of job creation to the local people, 37.5 % denied and 20% remained neutral. This reflects that the host community is not the real benefactors of tourism development in the study area. 40% of the respondents agreed to the fact that tourism at coastal area destroys and deteriorates natural resources and 30% remained neutral. It implies the fact that there is a loss of natural resources through different human activities in the coastal area. Most of them also agreed that coastal erosion is a major concern afflicting the coastal areas of Dakshina Kannada.
5. With respect to the planning and management, most of them have expressed the view that still much planning and development is required in this area. Private party should be welcomed with tax incentives and other financial support. Local community should be given subsidies and other financial support along with entrepreneurial training to venture into new business in the coastal area. All development should embrace the social and cultural values of local community. As far as sustainable development is concerned, there is no orientation or awareness among the local community about how development should be carried out.
6. As a response to the questions relating to the role of local community in coastal tourism development, 78% said that they want leading role as entrepreneurs, 65% expressed that their role can be as workers at all levels, 80% of them said they need a leading role in decision making and policy formulation of coastal tourism development. It indicates the fact that they have a passive role in these areas. All of the respondents support tourism and believe that tourism would bring them benefits. They all wish to see much more tourism development to take place in these areas.

Conclusion:

Coastal area is a very sensitive area in every respect and it requires clear planning while handling. This study shows that the present tourism development at coastal area is not in the right direction of sustainability in various aspects. All the beaches taken for the study have much potential but require effective and efficient planning. More involvement of local community at different levels of planning is one of the prerequisites, at the same time the developers should make sure that the local community is benefited and socio-cultural and environmental values are not deteriorated by tourism development in the coastal areas.

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